



News Release

San Francisco District Office

Release Date: 4/23/2009
Release Number: sf 09 03

Contact: Gary Marshall (415) 744-6771
gary.marshall@sba.gov

SBA San Francisco Announces 2009 Small Business Week Winners

SAN FRANCISCO - The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) in San Francisco has announced the winners of its 2009 Small Business Week awards. They range from a Northern California cheese maker, an executive with a Berkeley non-profit that helps low-income women become entrepreneurs, and a marketing/communications specialist in San Jose. The three winners – all women – will be honored May 18 in San Francisco during the kickoff of the city's annual Small Business Week celebration, as well as in their own communities.

Small Business Person of the Year: Mary Keehn, owner, Cypress Grove Chevre, Arcata.

Started in 1983 in Humboldt County, Cypress Grove Chevre has put American cheese making on the national (and international) map. Mary Keehn simply wanted a healthy source of milk for her children when she started raising Alpine goats in the 1970s. She soon gained recognition as a premier breeder of Alpine dairy goats, and the owner of way too much goat milk. She headed to the kitchen and started to stir up recipes for cheese. Local chefs and restaurants bought her cheese and word spread fast about the taste and quality. Today, Cypress Grove Chevre employs 42 and has awards from the American Cheese Society, the U.S. Cheese Championship, the World Cheese Awards and the National Association for the Specialty Food Trade. Two years ago, the company won the *Outstanding Product Line* at the 2007 International Fancy Food and Confection show in New York.

The SBA award's criteria is not only for developing an outstanding business; a business must also help make a contribution to the community. Cypress Grove has earned its reputation as a purveyor of excellent cheese by putting quality first. "We realize that quality must be evident in more than the cheese," says Keehn. "We have to have excellent milk, and that means healthy goats and family farms. By contributing to our employees and community, we make it clear that we are all motivated by the same commitment to quality of life. This award affirms that our focus is appreciated and valued by the business community as well as by our customers."

Keehn has served in leadership roles in a number of industry associations and was also the first chairman of the Humboldt Harvest, an incubator group formed to help small food businesses become successful. She also serves on the President's Advisory Board of Humboldt University.

"We're delighted we can give the award to a woman who is such a great asset to the community," says Mark Quinn, SBA's San Francisco district director whose territory covers much of Northern California. "Mary Keehn's attention to her business, her employees and the Arcata community is what made her an easy selection for our Small Business Person of the Year."

Keehn will receive the award at the Arcata Economic Development Corporation's *Spotlight on Success* event May 20 at the Arcata Theater Lounge.

SBA's Women in Business Advocate of the Year award: Julie Castro Abrams, CEO, Women's Initiative, Berkeley.

Women's Initiative is a Bay Area non-profit which offers high-potential, low-income women the training, funding and on-going support to start and grow their own businesses.

Julie Castro Abrams has been with the organization since 2001. Recently, she's overseen expansion efforts to serve the East Bay and North Bay areas with new facilities in Concord and Novato. She's remained a strong advocate for low income women entrepreneurs, successfully lobbying for a \$500,000 annual investment by the City of San Francisco in female micro-entrepreneur programs.

"Our office's relationship with Julie goes back a long way, and it's very gratifying to be able to show how much we appreciate what she's done," says SBA's Quinn.

Small Business Journalist of the Year award: Kymberli Brady, Director, Marketing and Communications, San Jose Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce.

SBA will salute Brady's contributions to the Silicon Valley business community as editor of the Chamber's full color newspaper, the Advocate, at the Chamber's annual luncheon May 21. Her connection to the local community extends beyond the Chamber to include volunteer work for St. Jude Children's Hospital, Hospice of the Valley, The Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, Valley Monte League and the Family Giving Tree where she helps increase awareness of the non-profit organizations and the good work they perform.

"It's unusual to be talking about someone whose job is speaking about other people - the members of her Chamber - but I'm glad we'll be able to shine a spotlight on someone who works so hard keeping the public aware of the value the Chamber brings to the small business world," said Quinn

###

CONTACT

SBA Public Information Officer

Gary Marshall

455 Market St.

San Francisco CA 94105

415 744 6771

Gary.marshall@sba.gov

SBA San Francisco District Director

Mark Quinn

455 Market St.

San Francisco CA 94105

415 744 8474

John.quinn@sba.gov

SBA San Francisco District Office Small Business Week awards for 2009

Small Business Person of the Year

Mary Keehn

Cypress Grove Chevre

1330 Q. St.

Arcata CA 95521

707 825 1100
cypgrove@aol.com

Women in Business Advocate of the Year
Julie Castro Abrams, Chief Executive Officer
Women's Initiative
1398 Valencia St.
San Francisco, CA 94110
(510) 287-3110
jabrams@womensinitiative.org

Small Business Journalist of the Year
Kymberli Brady
San Jose Valley Chamber of Commerce
310 South First St.
San Jose CA 95113
kymberlib@sjchamber.com
408.291.5265 phone
408.286.5019 fax
408.691.7826 cell
www.sjchamber.com